



STAFF REPORT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING DATE: 7/22/09

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ITEM DESCRIPTION: HPC-35007 – Request to designate the Westleigh Neighborhood, generally bounded by Charleston Blvd. on the north, Valley View Blvd. on the west, Oakey Blvd. on the south, and Cashman Dr. on the east, multiple APNs, R-1 (Single-Family Residential) Zone, and C-D (Designed Commercial) Zone, on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register as an Historic District, Ward 1 (Tarkanian).

BACKGROUND

- 09/26/07 HPC approved list of projects to be funded by Centennial Legacy funds. List included historic resource survey of Westleigh Neighborhood.
- 5/20/09 Planning & Development held open house meeting regarding designation of Westleigh Neighborhood.
- 5/21/09 Planning & Development held open house meeting regarding designation of Westleigh Neighborhood.
- 6/24/09 HPC approved nomination report for the Westleigh Neighborhood, and public hearing for the designation of the Westleigh Neighborhood on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register as an Historic District was scheduled for the July 22, 2009 HPC meeting.

ANALYSIS

The following information is summarized from “Westleigh Neighborhood Historic Resource Survey,” by Painter Preservation & Planning, 2009.

Description

The Westleigh neighborhood is made up of Westleigh Tracts One through Five, and comprises 288 properties whose construction dates range from 1951 to 1967, with most constructed in 1953 or 1954. All parcels are developed and few have been completely redeveloped. Most properties have been altered to some degree, however, and some (mostly commercial properties) have been altered inappropriately with respect to the historic character of the neighborhood. This report finds that 161 properties in Westleigh are contributing to the potential Historic District, and 127 are not. In other words, fifty-six percent (56%) of the properties retain sufficient integrity to contribute to a district. The neighborhood is an established and familiar feature in this area of the City because of its physical appearance.

Historic Significance

The homes in the Westleigh neighborhood reflect the city’s social and economic past, in that they are an inner ring suburb of the city constructed in the second wave of mid-century home building, the first being the World War II-era housing for defense workers and military families. In the post-war era, home building in Las Vegas was encouraged by federally-insured loan programs guaranteed by the Federal Housing Administration and the Veterans Administration. Home building was also necessary, as the city was expanding rapidly and the demand for new homes was high.

The homes were developed by the Federal Development Company of Nevada, an established company in Las Vegas with offices in the Cornet Building at Fourth and Fremont. The company also developed Hyde Park, northwest of Westleigh, and a 350-home tract in Henderson in 1951.

Financing for the Westleigh homes was provided by the Bank of Nevada and the Federal Housing Administration or Veterans Administration. The sales office and model house was at 3301 Cashman Drive, at the corner of Cashman and West Charleston Blvd.

Character-Defining Features

In contrast to many of the post-war subdivisions, particularly those developed under the auspices of the Federal Housing Administration, Westleigh, with its rectilinear blocks and alleys and roadway connections to neighboring streets, exhibits an older development pattern. Curved and looped street were encouraged by the FHA standards, but one of the purposes of this development pattern was to respect the topography of a site. Another pattern encouraged by FHA standards was to limit points of access to the subdivision, as this was felt to be safer. Westleigh does turn its back on surrounding streets through the lot and block pattern along Oakey and Valley View boulevards, thereby decreasing the amount of traffic entering along these edges. Overall, however, it is well-connected to the grid-iron pattern of the surrounding area.

An early advertisement for Westleigh shows that the houses typically had an open living and dining area, but a separated kitchen that was located at the back of the house, facing onto the rear yard. The homes had two or three bedrooms and one bathroom, which were accessed via a small vestibule. An ad lists the following home features.¹⁰ Residents report that the homes were built of very high quality.

Originally most homes had L-shaped, or nearly square or rectangular footprints. The roof forms were typically side gable, cross gable, or hip roofs with the main ridgeline parallel to the street. Today the majority of homes have irregular footprints, exhibiting additions primarily to the rear of the houses. Because the additions are typically to the rear, the roof forms as viewed from the street are often intact. In a number of cases, however, a side gable building has been extended into the side yard, increasing the length of the building and altering its basic shape.

The homes in the Westleigh neighborhood are transitional between the earlier Minimal Traditional style and the later Ranch house. This is in part because they are nearly square or just slightly elongated, in contrast to the long, low-slung form that characterizes the western or California Ranch house. They exhibit complex roof forms, another feature that distinguishes them from the classic Ranch house, and relatively narrow eaves. Finally, the design of the windows, with their smaller sash and casement and awning-style operations, is not typical of the later Ranch style, which tended towards larger windows and larger individual panes of glass.

The most distinctive and unusual features of Westleigh houses are their windows, which are steel frame, many with louvers along the bottom and no surrounds. The doors were flush without embellishment. Most of the homes were finished in stucco and had clapboard details. Many have a brick or stone accent under windows today, a feature that is in keeping with the style. Historic roofing was cement tile or wood shingle.

Findings

The Historic Preservation Officer has reviewed the attached historic resource survey of the Westleigh Neighborhood, and application for designation, and has found that the Westleigh Neighborhood meets the requirements for historic designation on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register.

The HPO recommends moving forward with the nomination with the following conditions:

1. Parcels zoned C-D (Designed Commercial) along Charleston Boulevard will be removed from historic district boundaries. See revised boundary map.

Per Historic Preservation Commission Bylaws 5.1.1, Commission Duties and Responsibilities:

- 5.1.1** *Review applications for the designations of Landmarks, Historic Properties and Historic Districts and make to the Planning Commission and City Council concerning the designation of buildings, sites, monuments, structures and areas, sites and improvements in the city as historic properties, landmarks, historic sites or historic districts in accordance with Title 19A of the city of Las Vegas Zoning Code.*

Per Title 19.06.090 G. Historic Preservation Commission - Powers, Etc.:

The powers, duties and activities of the HPC include the following:

1. Reviewing applications for the designation of Landmarks, Historic Properties and Historic Districts, and making recommendations to the Planning Commission concerning those applications. The review shall be in accordance with Section (I) of this Subchapter.

Per Title 19.06.090 I. Designation of Landmarks, Historic Properties and Historic Districts:

The Historic Preservation Officer finds that the Westleigh Neighborhood meets the following requirements as stated in the city of Las Vegas Title 19 Zoning Code for designation as an Historic District. **Please refer to highlighted sections below.**

1. An individual property, building, structure or archeological site may be designated as a Landmark if it demonstrates exceptional importance by qualifying under Subparagraphs (a) or (b) below:
 - a. It meets the criteria for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places.
 - b. It is determined to be of exceptional significance and expresses a distinctive character because:
 - (i) A significant portion of it is at least fifty (50) years old;
 - (ii) It is reflective of the City's cultural, social, political or economic past; and
 - (iii) Either:
 - A. It is associated with a person or event significant in local, state or national history; or
 - B. It represents an established and familiar visual feature of an area of the City because of its location or singular physical appearance.
3. An area may be designated as an Historic District if:
 - a. The area:
 - i) Includes a substantial concentration of properties, buildings or structures which individually meet the criteria in Subsection (1) of this Section, as well as other properties, buildings or structures which contribute generally to the overall distinctive character of the area and are united historically or visually by plan or physical development;
 - ii) Is bounded by documented historic boundaries such as early roadways, canals, subdivision plats or property lines, or by boundaries which coincide with logical physical or man-made features and reflect recognized neighborhood or area boundaries; and
 - iii) Includes non-contributing properties or vacant parcels only to the extent necessary to establish appropriate, logical or convenient boundaries; or

- b. The area includes or is composed of one or more archeological sites.

If designated on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register, the HPC will be responsible for reviewing any work requiring a permit for all buildings within the Westleigh Neighborhood Historic District.

Staff recommends that the HPC approve the nomination for designation of the Westleigh Neighborhood as an Historic District on the city of Las Vegas Historic Property Register.

If approved, the nomination for designation will be heard at the September 24, 2009 Planning Commission meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

APPROVAL with the following conditions:

- 2. Parcels zoned C-D (Designed Commercial) along Charleston Boulevard will be removed from historic district boundaries.

BACKUP DOCUMENTS

Application for city of Las Vegas Historic District Designation and supporting documents.

Revised map of proposed Westleigh Neighborhood historic district boundaries.

Copy of "*Westleigh Neighborhood Historic Resource Survey*," by Painter Preservation & Planning, 2009, to be available at the meeting.